

FOREWORD



Since President Clinton and Vice President Gore took office, we have witnessed dramatic changes in our economy. Fueled primarily by an explosion of technology and innovation, our nation has entered into a period of unparalleled economic prosperity. The Department of Commerce is uniquely positioned to address the opportunities and responsibilities our prosperity presents.

One of the Department's top priorities for Fiscal Year 2001 is to promote e-commerce and take every available step to close the digital divide. The Department's budget proposal would bring more people, places, and businesses into the technological mainstream, helping create digital opportunity in the e-commerce revolution. Although the private sector has led - and should continue to lead - it is the role of government to support the private sector where necessary and ensure that no person, place, or business is left behind.

While our economy is the strongest in a generation, there are still segments of our society that have not shared the full benefits of our prosperity. That is why the Department is proposing a number of initiatives this year aimed at providing more Americans the opportunity to succeed in the new economy — from Native American communities to the Mississippi Delta, and from underserved urban neighborhoods to poor rural communities.

We know that it is imperative to have a highly skilled workforce to keep our prosperity going. That is why our budget includes a new Minority Serving

Institution (MSI) initiative that will help build capacity at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions and Tribal Colleges, so that we help train more workers for the jobs of the future.

In an information economy, it is essential that we have good information. That is why our budget proposal includes the funding necessary to fully complete the Decennial Census and provide the American people the wealth of information that it offers.

To keep our economy strong, we must all continue to open markets abroad, which will create more opportunities for American workers and businesses. Our budget proposal seeks to expand our ability to promote the exports of goods made by American workers, significantly strengthen our efforts to enforce the trade agreements we have with other countries, and provides new resources to help communities that have suffered through plant closings and other sudden and severe economic dislocations.

But, as we seek to strengthen our economy, we must also protect the environment. The Department will focus on new ways to protect the ocean and rivers -- and help those who depend on it for their livelihood and way of life -- as well as improve how we predict weather and climate. In addition, the Lands Legacy Initiative will expand the Department's work with tribes, states, communities and the private sector to improve protection and sustainable use of the Nation's valuable ocean and coastal resources.

Finally, I have made managing the Department of Commerce a cornerstone of my tenure. The budget continues our efforts to modernize the Department for the 21st Century, making it a truly Digital Department so that our customers are provided better and more efficient services.

With our diverse responsibilities, we are more interconnected than ever before. In the final year of the Clinton-Gore Administration, the Commerce team will build on our successes and continue to enable businesses and the American people to participate in this thriving economy.